

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 210541Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9281

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 19873

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: CAMPAIGN '75 - MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS

REF: BANGKOK 19703

BEGIN SUMMARY: MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WERE HELD THROUGHOUT THAILAND DECEMBER 14. VOTER TURNOUT VARIED WIDELY FROM PROVINCE TO PROVINCE. THE OUTCOMES ALSO VARIED FROM REGION TO REGION. IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH SEASONED LOCAL POLITICIANS
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WON MOST OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SEATS. IN THE NORTHEAST

AND CENTRAL REGIONS NEWCOMERS FARED QUITE WELL. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE RESULTS FOR THE 26 JANUARY 1975 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION IS PROBLEMATICAL. END SUMMARY.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. ELECTIONS OF MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS IN MUNICIPALITIES THROUGHOUT THAILAND (EXCEPT BANGKOK) TOOK PLACE DECEMBER 14. A TOTAL OF 5195 CANDIDATES RAN FOR 1912 SEATS IN 118 MUNICIPAL COUNCILS. COUNCILS ARE OF DIFFERENT SIZES DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF MUNICIPALITY SERVED. CITY (NAKHON) COUNCILS HAVE 24 MEMBERS, TOWN (TETSABAN) 18, AND CANTON (TAMBON) 14. ALTHOUGH FINAL FIGURES ARE STILL UNAVAILABLE, VOTER TURNOUT RANGED FROM AN ESTIMATED 24 PERCENT IN CHIANG MAI TO NEARLY 90 PERCENT IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT.

II. NORTH THAILAND

2. THE CHIANG MAI CONSULATE REPORTS THAT WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS VETERAN LOCAL POLITICIANS WERE VICTORIOUS IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN THE NORTH. YOUNGER AND LESS WELL-KNOWN WINNERS MOSTLY SUCCEEDED AS MEMBERS OF SLATES WHICH PROMINENT PERSONALITIES HEADED. IN SEVERAL NORTHERN PROVINCES SLATES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES PARTICIPATED. SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY SLATES GENERALLY DID WELL, WHILE DEMOCRAT PARTY SLATES WERE SUCCESSFUL ONLY IN CHIANG RAI. A SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY SLATE IN UTTARADIT LOST TO A GROUP OF NEWCOMERS. VOTER PARTICIPATION WAS GENERALLY LOWER THAN IN OTHER REGIONS, PARTICULARLY IN CHIANG MAI WHERE AN ESTIMATED 24 PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS TOOK PART.

3. SLATES ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY WON 23 OF 24 SEATS IN CHIANG MAI, AND 14 OF 18 SEATS IN LAMPHUN. THE DEMOCRAT PARTY SLATE IN CHIANG MAI WON ONLY 1 OF THE 10 SEATS WHICH IT CONTESTED. IN CHIANG RAI, HOWEVER, A SLATE WHICH THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVINCE DEMOCRAT PARTY LED WON 15 OF 18 SEATS. IN UTTARADIT A GROUP WHICH A POLITICAL NEOPHYTE LED WON 16 OF 18 SEATS, WHILE A SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY SLATE WON ONLY 2. IN THE REMAINING NORTHERN PROVINCES SLATES COMPOSED LARGELY OF FORMER MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL

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ASSEMBLYMEN WERE VICTORIOUS. WHILE PREVIOUS COUNCILMEN WON IN KAMPHENGPHET, THE ELECTION THERE WAS A SET BACK TO PRASIT CHUPHANIT, THE PREVIOUS LORD MAYOR AND PROMINENT THAI NATION PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE, BECAUSE FEW OF PRASIT'S SUPPORTERS WON.

III. SOUTH THAILAND

4. VOTER TURNOUT IN THE SOUTH AVERAGED ABOUT 50 PERCENT, EXCEPT IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT WHICH THE CONSULATE IN SONGKHLA REPORTS HAD A TURNOUT OF NEARLY 90 PERCENT. ALTHOUGH MOST CANDIDATES RAN AS MEMBERS OF A SLATE, VOTERS TENDED TO CHOOSE INDIVIDUALS THEY KNEW. POLITICAL VETERANS WERE GENERALLY VICTORIOUS EXCEPT IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT AND SONGKHLA, WHERE CORRUPTION WAS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE. MOST WINNERS, LIKE THE MEN THEY REPLACED, ARE BANKERS, OR OTHER BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL MEN.

IV. NORTHEAST THAILAND

5. MANY NEW AND YOUNG POLITICIANS, INCLUDING SOME SINO-THAI, WON MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SEATS IN THE NORTHEAST. THE CONSULATE IN UDORN REPORTS THAT A SLATE COMPOSED OF NEW, INEXPERIENCED POLITICIANS WON 12 SEATS IN UDORN, DEFEATING THE FORMER MAYOR'S SLATE WHICH WON ONLY 6 SEATS. IN NAKHON PHANOM 11 CANDIDATES OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUP WON MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SEATS, WHILE THE FORMER MAYOR'S SLATE WON ONLY 7 SEATS. FIVE OF THE YOUNG MEN ARE SINO-THAI, AND ONE IS AN ISLAMIC-THAI FROM THAILAND'S SOUTHERNMOST PROVINCE OF NARATHIWAT BUT WHO HAS WORKED FOR THE U.S. AIR FORCE AS A LIAISON MAN WITH NAKHON PHANOM OFFICIALS FOR THE LAST NINE YEARS. A MAJORITY OF THE NEWLY ELECTED MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS IN KHON KAEN ARE NEW FACES; ONLY ONE FORMER COUNCIL MEMBER FROM THE SLATE WHICH THE PREVIOUS MAY SUPPORTED WAS VICTORIOUS. OF THE 24 MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS ELECTED IN KORAT, 11 ARE NEWCOMERS, 10 ARE SINO-THAI, AND HALF ARE 40 YEARS OF AGE OR UNDER.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 19873

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

V. CENTRAL THAILAND

6. VOTER TURNOUT IN CENTRAL THAILAND WAS GENERALLY 50 PERCENT OR HIGHER. THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR BRAGGED TO US THAT THE TURNOUT FOR THE AYUTTHAYA MUNICIPALITY WAS 76 PERCENT. THE GOVERNOR OF CHAINAT CLAIMED A 71 PERCENT TURNOUT IN WAT SING MUNICIPALITY. NEWCOMERS UPSET WELL KNOWN POLITICIANS IN SEVERAL PROVINCES. IN SUPHANBURI THE FORMER LORD MAYOR, THONGYOT CHITTAWIRA, CHAIRMAN OF THE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF THAILAND, LOST, ALONG WITH MOST OF HIS SLATE, TO
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NEWCOMERS. THONGYOT IS A CANDIDATE OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY IN THE GENERAL ELECTION, AND HIS DEFEAT IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION MAY AFFECT HIS CHANCES IN JANUARY. IN SAMUT SAKON A SLATE WHICH FORMER LORD MAYOR SURIN THEPKANCHANA SPONSORED WON ONLY 3 SEATS, WHILE NEWCOMERS WON A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS. SURIN IS ALSO A SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY CANDIDATE IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS, AND HIS FAMILY HAS DOMINATED LOCAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN SAMUT SAKON FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. FORMER COUNCILMEN ALSO LOST HEAVILY IN UTHAI THANI, CHAINAT AND ANGTHONG PROVINCES. THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF UTHAI THANI TOLD US THAT A SLATE OF NEWCOMERS TOOK 13 OF THE EIGHTEEN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SEATS. HE REFLECTED THAT THE VOTERS SELECTED WEALTHY OVER POOR CANDIDATES BECAUSE THE FORMER WOULD BE LESS SUBJECT TO ENGAGE IN CORRUPTION. THE SLATE LEADER. ONG-AT SUTAKHET HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN THE MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTANT UNTIL HE HAD A FALLING OUT WITH THE PREVIOUS LORD MAYOR, SUPPOSEDLY OVER CORRUPTION.

VI. CONCLUSIONS.

7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS FOR THE COMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IS PROBLEMATIC. RESULTS VARIED WIDELY FROM REGION TO REGION AND EVEN PROVINCE TO PROVINCE. MOREOVER, THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS TOOK PLACE IN URBAN CENTERS WHILE MOST OF THE POPULATION LIVES IN RURAL AREAS. VOTER TURNOUT IS USUALLY HIGHER FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS THAN FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. IN SOME CASES INDIVIDUALS WHO RAN IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE ALSO CANDIDATES IN THE GENERAL. THOSE WHO WERE VICTORIOUS IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WILL HAVE AN ADVANTAGE IN THE JANUARY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, WHILE OTHERS WHO DID POORLY IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HAVE TARNISHED THEIR IMAGES, AND POSSIBLY DAMAGED THEIR CHANCES IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS. THE LACK OF A NATIONAL TREND IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS MAY SUGGEST THAT NEWCOMERS MAY DO SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN EXPECTED IN THE COMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH THERE WILL NOT BE A WHOLESAL REJECTION OF SEASONED POLITICIANS.

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